



ENVIRONMENT

As we enter the 21st Century, many communities continue to struggle with difficult choices regarding environmental protection and job creation. While some view these choices as mutually exclusive, you may find that it's not so black and white. During this seminar you will discuss a simulated community called Simmeon, New Mexico, which is considering both the environmental and economic impacts of a new hydroelectric dam. You will participate in a mock City Council meeting to debate both sides of the issue and determine the future of Simmeon.

Questions To Consider

- How do you weigh the tradeoffs between environmental protection and economic development?
- Is there any common ground on these issues?

INTRODUCTION

One of the most important topics on the political landscape at various times has been the perceived contradiction between environmental protection and job creation. The polarization of this issue has caused great frustration in Congress and in some communities in New Mexico.

The purpose of this seminar is to provide an opportunity to discuss and explore the issues involved in the environment and jobs debate. By debating all sides of this issue, you will be better able to reach your own conclusions. You may find the issues to be more complicated and interconnected than expected.

To guide our discussion, we are all going to become members of a simulated community called Simmeon. Simmeon is facing a dilemma regarding the future of the community. National Power Supply (NPS) wants to build a hydroelectric dam across the Beautimus River which flows through town. The local chamber of commerce believes the dam is a good idea and that it will bring high paying jobs to town. In the short term, construction of the dam will facilitate job creation. In the long term, low electricity rates may bring manufacturing facilities and jobs to town. There are several people in the community who feel that the dam would bring much needed growth to the community. At the same time, several business leaders in the central business district who are committed to using Simmeon's natural resources are actively working against the building of the dam as are the environmental advocates. The city council is going to determine the fate of the Dam Project. Your exercise involves debating the issue before the City Council. At the end of the debate, a vote will be taken to determine the outcome.

As a group we will discuss all sides of the dam development. You will be examining such issues as standard of living, quality of life, impact on the education system, environmental regulation, future direction of the community, as well as others.

After we have discussed these issues, you will be assigned a position in the community which includes your profession, age, marital status, number of children, and special designations. Based on this profile, you will decide which side of the issue you are on. Five of you will be selected (at random) to serve as city councilors.

Simmeon, New Mexico

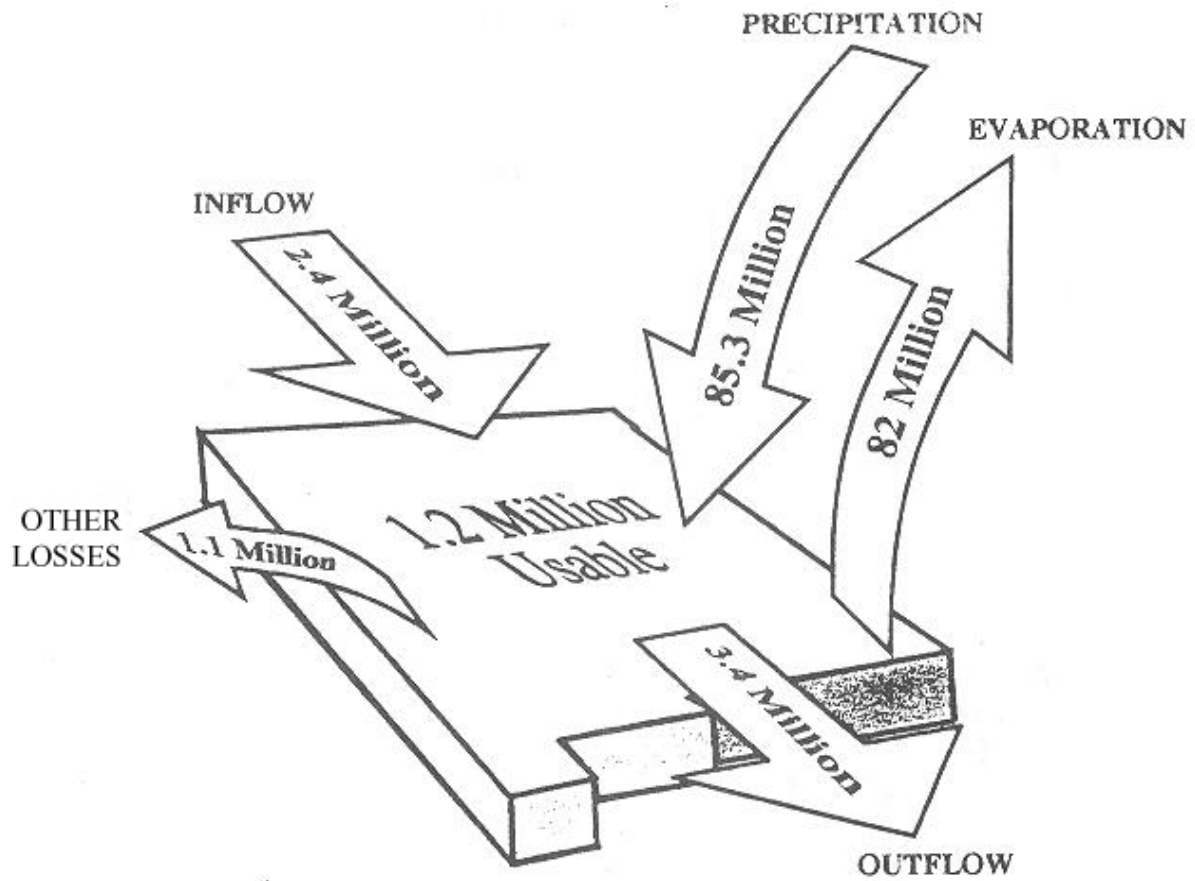
Simmeon, New Mexico, is a small community nestled in the foothills of the mountains. It maintains a rich history as a mining community and a base of operations for hunting and fishing enthusiasts. In addition to the natural resources, Simmeon was the site of an Air Force facility for high altitude pilot training from the 1950s to the late 1980s.

About 12 years ago, the Air Force base just outside of Simmeon was closed. The economy of the community suffered a severe downturn. Immediately after the base closure, land values decreased and many small businesses closed in the central business district.

A couple of years ago, there began a resurgence in the local economy. Many of the historic downtown buildings were converted into Bed & Breakfasts, micro-breweries, arts & crafts galleries, and tourist spots highlighting Simmeon's historic mining past. Hunting and fishing guides were expanding and growing their business, as were the local rafting and hiking services.

Water Budget for New Mexico

(values in acre feet)



Major Hydrological Basins in New Mexico

